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New Y - A Reason for Optimism

By Henry Peet, Chairperson
New YMCA Capital Campaign

As we celebrate the Holiday Season and the end of the year, I take this opportunity to report on the New Y Campaign and offer some reflections on the year that is closing.

As you may have heard, in the fall we were given an awesome task and challenge. An anonymous donor challenged us to complete the fundraising of the Capital Campaign at that time we had only raised about half of our goal. The donor pledged a gift of \$2 million if we could be matched 2:1 by \$4 million in new gifts and pledges by December 31 ...this year.

The donor's challenge pledge has inspired some extraordinary giving. Rotary Charities increased their gift bringing their total Campaign gift to \$1 million. The Oleson Foundation also made an additional gift for a total of \$750,000 to the project. We have gotten over the course of the campaign over 500 gifts totaling \$10.4 million.

People and organizations are stepping up and making first, second, and sometimes third gifts to the Capital Campaign. Others have made multi-year pledges which also count toward the Challenge. Every gift that is given, no matter the size, has helped us to get this far and still is critical for us to achieve our goal.

We are still looking to raise some \$1.6 million as of this date (12/15/2011).

Yes, it will take some extraordinary giving by ordinary people, businesses, and philanthropic foundation over the next 15 days to make this goal. We are confident that people will step up and make the New YMCA a reality.

Construction of the facility will begin only after we have raised the necessary funds. With the help of this great community, that could be a few short months from now.

Since 1964, your Y has been meeting needs of children and families in our community that otherwise would go unmet. We embody the founding principles of the YMCA movement. We put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that strengthen the whole individual - the spirit, mind, and body. We support the development and enrichment of each individual to build strong families and a strong community. This we do for the entire population of our region, regardless of their economic circumstances.

The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA is fundamentally a charitable institution, (a fact that escapes many people in our community.) Our YMCA operates on a mixed income model that balances paid services and charitable activities. Contributions make up

the critical gap each year between the cost of programs for children and families and the income we derive from paying members and program users.

The case for the New YMCA remains compelling. In fact, during this year of transition and change, the critical, unmet needs in our community became even clearer to those of us who lead the YMCA. The proposed new facility is needed more than ever.

- Our 5-county region needs additional swimming pools. In our studies we found that 40% of seventh graders could not swim 25 yards to save a friend. The New Y includes a training pool and a competitive pool.
- Our 5-county region has no family-oriented, comprehensive recreational and health campus complex. The New Y's pool, fitness, and tennis facilities will provide these.
- Our teens lack a place to meet, to socialize and to pursue athletic activities. The New Y includes teen fitness area and a teen center.
- The lack of sound nutrition and physical activity are underlying causes of youth obesity, a national epidemic with significant costs to society. The New Y Fitness Center will include dedicated youth and senior fitness areas.
- Tennis facilities, a major program of this Y, are in short supply in our region. The New Y will include 6 indoor tennis courts.

The New YMCA delivers solutions to these needs through expanded programs in a new, comprehensive health and recreation center. Essential areas within the proposed 100,000 square foot facility include swimming pools, fitness and exercise rooms, tennis center, and space for community use. Outside the building are new playing fields for soccer, lacrosse and football.

We have been continuing to tell the story of the New YMCA Campaign to people like you who support this vision for our region. Hundreds of volunteers have been in the process of making sure the right people hear the story and hopefully make a generous donation even in this economy.

Is there reason for optimism? Yes, there is. The YMCA movement began in England in 1844 to provide faith-based centers for supervised recreation, social engagement, and cultural activities. In the US, the movement took root and adapted to our changing society. At the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA, we are non-denominational and inclusive, a welcoming center for a growing community. The charitable model thrives in Traverse City. Our 65 programs currently serve over 11,000 users in our region regardless of financial means. Our new Y will be a place for children and families throughout the region to gather in one place for wholesome, affordable recreation and skills development. We are still defined by our principles and values. We are driven by a mission that is as relevant today as it was a century ago.

Your support now is essential not only to fulfill this Challenge Pledge, but also to provide the region the health and recreational facility that it deserves. Everyone here in the Grand Traverse region deserves a great YMCA!

Your online donations can be taken at www.4good4ever.org or by calling our partner the Community Foundation at 935-4066. More information about the Campaign can be founded at www.gtbayymca.org or 933-9622.

Thank you for your support and your gifts to make the New Y a reality.

Henry Peet is the Campaign Chairperson for the New Y Capital Campaign.